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*Plain Truth: Or, a Representation of the real
Cause of all our National Disappointments and
Calamities.*

IN A
DISCOURSE

Occasioned by the late
GENERAL FAST;

And ADDRESSED to the *People of*
GREAT BRITAIN.

By a CLERGYMAN of the Church of
England.



L O N D O N:

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M.DCC.LVIII.



*If an Beibull und si erneuert die alten Wider
und neueren Geschichten nicht so sehr
noch EZECHIEL, Chap. vii, ver. 14.*

*They have blown the trumpet, even to make all
ready; but none goeth to the battle: for, my
wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.*

IT is generally mentioned, as the use and commendation of history, that it serves not only to record great actions and great names, but also to make us acquainted with human nature, to bring us to the knowledge of men; or, in the modern phrase, to teach us to know the world.—And indeed this is a very valuable acquisition, when considered as a means either to excite our emulation by the worthy examples of our fore-fathers, or by a view of their oversights and mistakes to rectify our own conduct.

But, of all histories, none is comparable for utility in these respects, to those ancient records the histories of the BIBLE.

In these, we are taught to observe, not only the actions of men, but the correspondent transactions of providence; and are thereby instructed, from infallible authority, how to avoid those errors and misfortunes, which common historians leave either unsatisfactorily accounted for, or, at best, to the uncertain judgment of mere human prudence to correct.—Such, too, are the variety of incidents

in holy writ, that, were it but studied as it ought, there could scarce any case happen for which one might not find a suitable direction in some parallel relation of the inspired writers. Hence, what the wise man observed of this lower world, is most eminently true of the holy scriptures; and one may be bold to affirm, that as *there is nothing new under the sun*, so whoever attentively reads those sacred pages, will find nothing *new or unprecedented* in any period of our sublunary existence.

The words of my text are, in part, a proof of this. For, supposing EZECHIEL to have lived but in these our days—to have considered our many mighty preparations, our formidable armaments and abortive attempts; what more proper, more descriptive words could be have made use of, when speaking in the name of the Almighty, than these? *they have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for, my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.*

Here, indeed, though our dishonour is exactly enough described, it is yet very differently accounted for, from what we could ever expect to find it in any common historian, however faithful and precise.—The very best of these will always endeavor, in some degree, to flatter the opinions of those he writes for; and will impute every misfortune, disappointment and mistake, to any cause, rather than to the only true and original one. Accordingly,

ingly, in his account of things, we may naturally expect to read of *weak councils*, and *dishonest statesmen*; of *wrong choice*, *undue preference*, *iniquitous connections*; and *want of capacity or ability*, of *courage or integrity*, in *commanders, &c.* And, in this manner, we may conceive him to account for the ruinous state of our affairs; and the dejection of a *brave and honest people*.

This, it must be confessed, would be both plausible and flattering; and could not fail of being well received by those, who (for this very reason, because themselves are delinquents) would gladly fix the blame upon others.

But, all this while, the root of the matter remains untouched, and nothing is advanced which may any way direct us to a *radical cure* of our political disorders; all that has been said tending only to throw the *entire blame* on those in power.—But, these, if they must be considered as *causes* (as it is but too probable they are) are, however, but *secondary causes*; the energy of which might have been either prevented, or controuled to our advantage by the direction of providence—had we, the multitude, been less undeserving its favorable protection,

We want not then to be put in mind, either of *our disappointments*, or *their reproach*; but to be acquainted with the *true sources*, the *real grounds and reasons* of them; that knowing

whence they spring, we may be the better enabled to prevent the occasions of them for the time to come.

Let us see then!—*We have blown the trumpet, even to make all things ready; but none goeth to the battle*—and why?—For this plain, this sufficient, this undeniable reason—because the wrath of God is upon all the multitude thereof.

This, after all, is what one would think we were already, in some degree, sensible of; or, our superiors would never have enjoined a day of public humiliation, nor we ourselves affect so solemn an observance of it.—But what?—Is there any charm in setting apart one day in the year for confession of our sins, and the depreciation of the divine vengeance? and do we think the Almighty *altogether such a one as ourselves*, to be pleased with outward ceremony, or appeased with a few fair words?—Truly, if we consider our *solemn fasts*, those, I mean, that are already past, together with the *inconsistency* of our *subsequent behaviour*, we may seem, in some measure, to justify the *perverſeness* of that people, who refuse to appear occasionally devout, lest, with the generality, they should be thought to esteem the *necessity* of devotion likewise to be no more than *occasional*.

'Tis to the last degree disingenuous and absurd, to imagine that the solemnity of *one* or of *several days* devotion, should be sufficient to atone for a *general* and almost *continual* transgression:—or, that, bating the *solemn assembling* of

of ourselves together, there should not *every day* be as great reason for living soberly righteously and religiously according to the *will of God*, as for living so *one day*, or for *several days*, in obedience to a *royal proclamation*, or the *orders of a human establishment*.

'Tis not then the want of a *specious appearance*, or of a *rigid compliance* with *occasional solemnities*, so much as the want of *obedience*, of *boliness* and *integrity* in our *habitual deportment*, which has *separated between us and our God*—has caused him to *turn his face from us*; and made his *wrath* to rest upon the *multitude*. 'Tis this has occasioned the trumpet to sound, *even to make all ready*, while none goeth to the *battle*: or, if we go, that we are made to *turn our backs upon our enemies*, so that they which hate us, *spoil our goods*; and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

To be convinced of this, permit me to consider a few *particulars* in our general conduct, such especially as we are most apt to censure in our *superiors*; and which, in their own nature, are most apt to contribute to the *ruin of a people*—not only as they *provoke the divine vengeance*; but as, in the common course of things, they are *subversive of every social establishment*.—And here, what mouth is not open against a *selfish venal disposition*, and want of *public spirit*?—Is not this the cry of the *multitude*? And do we not too frequently attribute our ill success as a nation, to these things in our *governors*?—But, in the mean time, let us reflect

a little!—Are not the same *sordid vices*, the same *selfish narrow* spirits to be found (in a most *eminent* and most *notorious* degree) among the *complainants* themselves?—Do not we ourselves, *look for the like pitiful gains, every one from his own quarter?*—Surely, it becomes us to avoid *that opprobrium*, which we are so inconsiderately zealous in fastening upon *others*.—But, instead of this, do we not *daily* see that every man has his *price*? and that the virtue of individuals remains no longer, however *glaring* the appearance of it, than while it serves to support the aspirings of their ambition, and satisfy the cravings of their secret wants.—How *easily* do the most *noisy* patriots of middling and lower life, vere about, according as their private interests and connections happen to direct!—Not only a *place* or *pension*, or *lucrative* employment, but even *empty titles* (and those too, God knows! not always of *the greatest note*) nay, even a *morsel of bread* is sufficient to blind our eyes; and to make us let fall that integrity we are so *jealously concerned* to uphold in the hands of *those in power*.—Yet, if we address each singly—O what *zeal!* O what care for the public good! What calls for justice, for reformation, and national regard! And who but *we* for *honourable men!*—And, indeed, *such and so great* are the general praises and encomiums on *integrity*, that one would imagine the nation to be made up of none

none but *patriots*; and that the multitude thereof were all—all honourable men.

Among these, however, if we durst venture to be familiar with them, we shall find, not only priests speaking smooth things, prophesying deceits and loving the rewards of unrighteousness; but those likewise who invite to this, and love to have it so: not only the rich oppressing the poor, the higher tyrannizing over the lower; but, even among these lower, men devouring defrauding and circumventing one another; and band joining in band to strengthen themselves in their wickedness.—Then, as to our endeavouring to promote the prosperity of our country, how many are there not who set themselves to do just the reverse?—Do the wheels of government move slow, how many are there not, even while they pretend to wish well to this our Sion, who endeavor all they can, in secret, to unhinge the whole, and to add affliction to the daughter of their people? In whose very countenances one may read a malignant joy gawz'd thinly over with expressions of concern, upon every event that arises to trouble Israel? Hence, that spirit of anarchy, tumult and disorder, which has so lately stalked through the land! Hence, too, the distraction of our councils, and the confusion of our measures and regulations!

In these circumstances, the trumpet indeed may sound, even to make all ready—but, what wonder that none goeth effectually to the battle?

The

The wrath of God is, evidently, upon the multitude—how should they prosper?

But what then, are all gone out of the way? are all combined to forward that destruction they would be thought to dread? God forbid! Yet, in the mean time, 'tis but too true, that the generality of us act as if we thus intended: a spirit of selfishness is gone out into the midst of the people; and an almost universal want of public spirit seems to be the great moral defect in the characters of all ranks and degrees of men.

Hence, all those little tricks and dishonest arts in our common dealings with each other! Hence it is, that the eye of the needy fails before the rich, and that the poor languisheth for bread in the midst of plenty.—Or, to express myself in the words of the inspired pen-men, hence are our houses filled with violence, and our chambers with wrong; and that so many grow fat with the spoils of the oppressed.

That these are not vain imaginations, rhetorical flourishes, or the mere declamations of a preacher; is too evident from the cries of those, who (tho' perhaps of no greater integrity themselves) are yet filling our ears with the voice of murmur and complaint.—If any, then, would deny the charge; he must first be able to prove, that even in common trade, in ordinary business, there are yet no false balances in the house of the wicked, no bags of deceitful weights; that there are no defrauding in our

markets, nor abomination in our streets. But, alas! who durst say thus, when the very reverse of all this is so manifestly apparent.

Instead, then, of denying, excusing, or extenuating such guilt, ought we not to take shame upon ourselves, and to confess that violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness; that the time seems, indeed, to be come, that the buyer shall not rejoice, nor the seller return to that which is sold; but that wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.—Well, then, may we demand attention of some, in the words of the prophet AMOS,—*Hear ye this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, when will the new-moon be gone that we may sell corn? and the sabbath; that we may set forth wheat, making the Ephah (the measure) small, and the shekel (or the price) great, and falsifying the ballances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?*

I would ask, now, do not our hearts burn within us, at the words of this reproach? And must not the respective consciences of many recoil upon them; and say to each—is it not I? If this then be the real fact with too many among us, what have we not to fear? Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? —May we not fear that the Lord hath sworn, as he once did, by the excellency of Jacob, surely, I

will never forget any of their works.—Shall not the land then tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein; lest it rise up wholly as a flood, and be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt? We have, indeed, made a shew of fasting and mourning year after year; but, have we at all turned from the evil of our doings, undone the heavy burthens, or let the oppressed go free? On the contrary, we seem to have grown obstinate in our wickedness, and, by heaping transgression upon transgression, have sinned yet more against the Most High. For this, the arm of the Lord is stretched out still, and his anger is not departed from us.

We feed, 'tis true, upon the *husks* of religion; but the *kernel*s, the more substantial duties of it (*judgment mercy and truth*) we set at nought. We require *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept*; and, upon *fast days*, especially the days of the more *solemn assembly*, for *sermon upon sermon*: yet these, if not afterwards neglected and despised, are, in the words of the prophet, *only as a very lovely song of one that bath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument*; for we hear the words, but do them not.

But, farther; not only for a *selfish* disposition, a *want of public spirit*, and the dishonest arts more *immediately consequent thereupon*, does the land mourn; but likewise for the *iniquitousness* of our *connections*, and the *undue influence* we exercise over one another, to promote the

the * *undeserving*, to uphold transgression, to skreen offenders and prevent the impartial administration of justice.—But, what—this is a charge which has been *heavily laid* upon our *superiors*—and is it to be laid likewise upon the *multitude*? upon us, who are so impatient for the *reformation of abuses in higher life?* Should this be thought to require an answer, seek but in the next *parish*, or the next *street*, I had almost said in the next *vestry*, and you will find, that iniquities to be *punished by the judges* are not only *connived at*, but sometimes actually *encouraged and defended*; that we not only follow the multitude to do evil, but that *evil-doers* themselves are too often *upheld by the multitude*. Is there any *flagrant enormity* committed, any *public injury* offered the community, provided it does not immediately and sensibly affect our personal interest, and we have a *connection* with the *delinquent*, either as a *friend*, a *neighbour*, or a *relative* of the same family, or any *interest* with him in the same profession; what *pains* are not taken, and *endeavours* used, to *secrete excuse* or *extenuate* the offence? and even, *not seldom*, parties formed, *entirely to exculpate the offender*?

To this, in a good measure, is owing, the continuance of those public frauds already

* By the *undeserving*, the author is presumed to mean not only those of actual ill desert, but those likewise who are destitute of proper *qualifications* and *abilities* to discharge the duties of the respective offices to which they are appointed.

complained of, which not only provoke the divine vengeance, but in their own nature tend to the destruction of every *national* community. To this, in short, are owing all those *iniquitous combinations*, that *artificial dearth*, that *infamous scarcity*, which even the rich must feel, and the *poor lament*; and which none but those *harpies of hell* can uphold, who fill their bellies with their *HID treasure*, while they inhumanly suck out no small advantage from the people, on account of that want which they themselves have occasioned.

But, besides these, other weighty accusations are brought against the men of power, and they are charged with *luxury* and *indolence*, with a spirit of *idleness* and *destructive dissipation*, which, say some, are the *cause*, and a very sufficient cause, of all our *public misfortunes*. — That these vices are extravagantly indulged, to the neglect of every salutary measure for the public welfare, is *too true* to be denied; — and that these, of themselves, are a very sufficient cause of our miscarriages in public affairs, must be likewise allowed.

But, in the mean time, how do the *multitude*, how do *we ourselves* behave, under a *sense* of these things? — While the *envied great ones* spend their fortunes in *vice* and *extravagance*, do *we* enjoy ours with *temperance*? or employ them in *doing good* to those around us? Do we retrench all *unnecessary* and *vicious expence*, in order to maintain our *own families* and relieve those

those those that are *in want?* Are we as *affiduous* and *industrious* as we ought in our respective callings, while we blame the *indolence* and *inactivity* of those *above us?*—And while we censure that spirit of *gaming* and *dissipation* that appears in *others*, are not many of us involved, as far as our *bumbler* connections will admit, in the same *baneful* practices, and under the *like* condemnation! And, as an *incontestible* proof that we are *really* so, are we not *somewhat* offended, *somewhat* hurt at the mention of it?

Yet, suffer we thus far! at least, in this place: considering that *plain truth* is not *frequently* to be met with, or attended to, *elsewhere*. Well indeed would it be, if in *any place*, or at *any time*, these things were *properly laid to heart*:—but what hopes of this, while *prophaneness* and *irreligion* assume the seat of scorners?—And here again is *another* of the demerits of *high life*, *another cause* of *public misfortunes*.—But, alas! how *strongly* does it not operate likewise among those of *all conditions*, even to the *lowest class?*—Are not *senseless oaths* and *blasphemous execrations*, *foolish filthy* and *prophane jestings*, to be met with among *persons* of *all ranks*, *inferiors* as well as *superiors?* And for *inattention*, *impatience*, *disgust* and *neglect* in *religious matters*, are there not even *plowmen* on a level with their *bettters?*

All this is not said with the least design to *exculpate* the *higher orders* of men, of whom,

as

as much is given them, much is and will be required—but only to remind us, that since we ourselves know so well what is right and wrong in the conduct of others, we should be careful to amend our own.—This is our own proper concern; our own more immediate province. We may frequently command and order our own doings; but the actions of others are not often in our power: nay, if they were, it would signify little to the prosperity of those, the generality of whom would still neglect to reform themselves. It must be a general, a national REFORMATION, which alone can produce a general and national PROSPERITY. Indeed the religion and virtue even of a few individuals, may, sometimes, respite the destruction of a community, through the *special mercy* and favour of providence. But, yet, when irreligion and vice are once *epidemical*, the worst evils may justly be feared; as, in that case, the wrath of God must needs be upon the multitude thereof. Oh the contrary, were once the bulk of the people reformed; as many, at least, as are wise enough to see the faults of their superiors; we might soon expect that the Almighty, in whose hands are the hearts of kings, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, would then take the matter into his hands, and teach our senators wisdom.

Let us remember, that there is no wisdom, no understanding nor counsel against the Lord; and instead of putting our trust in princes, or in any

any child of man, instead of making flesh our arm, or confiding even in the wifest counsels of the most sagacious and popular Abithopbel; let us, by our future behaviour, endeavor to render HIM propitious, who alone is counsel and sound wisdom, and understanding and strength.

Then we need not fear the multitude of the nations round about, though the kings of the earth stood up, and the princes took counsel together against us; the lord of hosts would be with us, the God of Jacob would be our refuge.—Then would our fear our confusion and reproach be turned upon our enemies: a thousand should flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five should they flee.—At least, from the blood of the slain our swords would not return empty; nor our commanders any more inglorious.

In the mean time, would we have reformation above! Are we desirous of able ministers, honest statesmen, men of honour and integrity, let us ourselves endeavor to furnish such to our country's service!—Let our youth be so instructed, principled, and educated, as that some in higher, some in lower life, may all be useful members of the commonwealth, and contribute all they can to the prosperity of their people. Let them be so carefully and thoroughly instructed in the ways of virtue and religion, that they may learn, always, sincerely to esteem and practice both; so disciplined and trained, in the paths of obedience and integrity, that the rising generation may make some amends, at least, for

for the depravity of their fathers.—But, even this will be impracticable, unless we immediately reform ourselves, and correct those examples which we have too frequently set before them.—This, once earnestly set about, we shall find the work prosper in our hands; and the success of our endeavors to be proportionable to our wishes.

That such a particular reformation of individuals in *private* life, would necessarily have a very happy influence on our *public* as well as *private* concerns;—would remove the wrath of God from the multitude; and effectually invite his mercy to pardon, bless and prosper us, as a people, is evident even from the natural tendency of things.—Whence, for instance, are *princes* taken? whence are *lords* created, *ministers* chosen, *commanders* appointed, and *soldiers* raised?—Is it not from among the *PEOPLE*?

Let then but the *PEOPLE* reform *themselves*, and *persevere* in such reformation; and we may hope to see such a constant supply of fit and able and honest men, in the several offices places and employments of life; as will not only be an honour to our government, but a bulwark to the nation.

A people thus reformed, instead of taking delight to blacken the character of their superiors, debasing their credit in order to exalt their own, would learn to reverence their worth;

worth; brighten their own virtues, and share in their deserts.

This is a change, so *absolutely necessary* to recover ourselves from that *ruinous state* into which we are fallen as a nation; that, without it, (however *romantic* and *impracticable* it may seem to be effected) we appear, in *sober truth*, to be an *undone people*, ripe for vengeance, and devoted to destruction.

But, to proceed: as we have hitherto seen, that the *true and original source* of all our *public misfortunes* and *disappointments*, are our *vices iniquities* and *ill-deserts* as a people; as these, in a *natural*, as well as *judicial way*, must occasion the *wrath of God* to be upon *all the multitude thereof*; and as we have, actually, hitherto, sounded the trumpet in vain, and made all ready, while *none goeth*, to any purpose, to the battle; the great question that remains to be resolved, is plainly this—by *what means* we may remove those evils from among us; and, by a *general, actual* and *lasting amendment*, may secure the *favour of God*; engage him to *pardon our past offences*, to turn on *our side*, and to send, not his *wrath*, but his *blessing upon the multitude?*

But, here, methinks, I perceive myself prevented, by the remonstrances of those, who, willing to shift the blame from themselves, are desirous that those in *high life* should lead the way to *that reformation*, which they themselves are *unwilling* to begin.

To hear such persons talk, one would be tempted to imagine, that *religion* and *virtue* were no more than (what they are too often esteemed) a mere kind of outward garment; which it would be unfit to appear in, while *out of fashion*, and exploded by the *polite world*. And hence it is, that men put on the appearance of *penitents*, just as they go into *public mourning*; not so much out of regard to *authority* or *regret* for the *deceased*, as because it is *fashionable* and *genteeel*.—But, in the mean time, it would be well; if, instead of being so *exceedingly ceremonious* and *well bred*, in matters of such great, such *universal concern*; we would learn to be a little more *sincere*, a little more *hearty*—if instead of waiting for the reformation of our *superiors*, or needing the sanction of their examples, to be honest and upright (which by the way rather betrays *interestedness* than discovers *integrity*) we would ourselves set about *practising social virtues*, *reforming* our private conduct, and *amending* each one himself; we should find, by a *happy experience*, a very sensible alteration in our *prosperity* as well as *morals*: and, however unworthy a few great ones of the earth might be, they would, at least, be restrained by the *shame* of the *multitude* from their more *public enormities*; and, like the scribes and chief priests of old, would learn to *fear*, to *reverence* the *PEOPLE*.

Now the *natural consequence* of this would be, that in the choice of our *representatives*,

our magistrates, public officers, commanders and the like, both governors and governed would unite in countenancing and promoting the worthy, and in discountenancing and degrading the unworthy.—Instead of party clamour, and mere titled-pretensions, MERIT, true and unaffected MERIT (ever modestly reluctant) would then be set up to public esteem and shine in public view. No longer should we see any dishonourable prostitution in high life, nor any base or unmanly servility in low.—So far otherwise, that ambition would, then, yield to integrity, dissipation to diligence, private interest to the love of our country, effeminacy to manly courage, and discontent to obedience.—In a word, virtue would triumph over vice, and religion prevail over prophaneness and impiety; and the * abominations of the town would no longer be exported to infect the country.

—If then so much depends upon the amendment of individuals in private life, and if such and so great would be the effects of general reformation, (for, an absolutely universal one, however desirable, is too much to be expected) it must surely be a secret well worth enquiry, by what means it may be effected.—Nor are these

* The abominations here complained of, as exported into the country, can surely be nothing new; unless, perhaps, they were intended to denote card playing, &c. on Sundays: but 'tis hardly credible, that people of fashion would thus run the hazard of having their peculiar seasons of diversion vulgariz'd, unless they intend shortly to change them.

altogether so difficult, discouraging, or impracticable, as we, at first, may be apt to imagine.—On the contrary, the prescription is short, easy and natural: and if it at all seem otherwise, it can be only to those, who are almost past feeling, or totally irrecoverable. In a word, 'tis no more than this—a proper degree of the LOVE and FEAR of God.—These are principles, which if once duly entertained, would infallibly influence our conduct, and be productive of that national amendment we shall otherwise wish for in vain.

Whoever considers, that 'tis the Almighty alone that presides over all the kingdoms of the earth; that he pulleth down one and setteth up another; and that he often bringeth it to pass, that one wicked nation is stirred-up to execute vengeance upon another; and that to this purpose he raiseth up the ungodly to be his ministers of wrath against the workers of iniquity—whoever considers this, must needs be convinced, that he alone can defeat our counsels, blast our designs and confound our most subtle devices, even against the most injurious attempts of our enemies—that 'tis he who can make our young men faint by the way, and our old men to lack wisdom for the war: and, in a word, that 'tis he and none but he, who, for our manifold impieties and crying abominations, has caused us to hear the voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. On the other hand, whoever considers what our ears have heard, and our fathers' have

have told us (not only what God hath done in their days and in the old times before them—how he cast out the nations and planted us in—but also) how frequently, mercifully and almost miraculously, he hath since defended us, and rescued us from the hands of our enemies, who, at different times, and on every side, have attempted to subvert our excellent constitution both in church and state, and to deprive us of every thing valuable both in our religious and civil liberties—whoever, I say, considers these things, cannot but find reason to lament our monstrous ingratitude, for so many, and so great, such repeated and undeserved blessings.

The least ingenuous disposition, one would imagine, would have been sufficient to make us love the Lord our God, who hath already, and so frequently, done such great things for us; and have caused us to draw near to him, in the most constant assiduous and sincere obedience to his laws. In this manner might we reasonably be thought to demean ourselves towards him, who alone has thus, often, shewn himself the rock of our strength and our mighty deliverer.

As to the mercies of our REDEMPTION, the means of grace and the hope of glory, these (tho' beyond comparison, the far greatest obligations we have to the great supreme Lord of heaven and earth) seem, I am sorry to say it, too remote and spiritualized, to make any sensible impression on our minds; and appear only to be blessings which we have long since learnt to acknowledge with

with our lips, while we neglect them in our lives; though we cease not, in the mean time, to be very zealous for modes of faith, external profession, and forms of worship.—Thus, while we call ourselves protestants, and profess the truth in theory, we remain almost as unreformed in practice as the most deluded and diabolical papist; and perhaps more so, than many of the heathen.

Meanwhile however, were we indeed reformed, were we protestants indeed, and such as we would be thought, how different should we not appear!—How much better should we not be!—If the love of God were indeed shed abroad in our hearts, did it rule, guide, direct and influence us as it ought; and did we, in fact, cherish and encourage it within us; what a different people should we not be!—what a different scene of things—what an amendment should we not experience!—No narrow views, no sinister intentions would then be set on foot, or direct our conduct—no frauds or combinations in private life, nor iniquitous measures in public; no lurking arts to defraud the public revenue, nor selfish schemes to embezzle the public money: on the contrary, with a single eye, a single hand, and a single heart, we should all render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God, the things that are God's.

As we should then act under a constant sense of the inspection of an all-seeing God, and with a sincere intention to recommend ourselves, in his sight, to his favor and protection; whatever might

might be our calling, occupation, office or em-
ployment, we should still direct all to his glory;
and, by that means, to the advantage and pro-
perity of ourselves and others.—They that rule
would rule with diligence; they that obey,
would be, not as eye servants, mercenary time-
servers or mere men-pleasers, but as the servants
of God. In this situation, what might we not
hope, what might we not expect!—The bles-
sing of the most high would second our endea-
vors; and our endeavors themselves, tend
naturally to secure and promote that blessing.
No longer should we sound the trumpet in
vain, even to make all ready. Our hosts would
then go out to the battle with a shout, and re-
turn with songs of triumph; and the wrath of
God would cease from the multitude.—The ge-
nerality of us, thus actuated by the love of the
most high, and returned to the paths of obe-
dience, we might then not unreasonably ex-
pect, that the Lord would set us on high above
all nations on earth; that we should be blessed in
all that we put our hands unto—in the city, and
in the field; in the fruit of our bodies, and in the
fruit of our grounds; in the fruit of our cattle,
the increase of our kine, and the flocks of our
sheep; in our basket and our store, in our coming-
in and going-out. And then might we hope
that the Lord would cause our enemies that
rise up against us, to be smitten before our face;
and that, when they are come out against us one
way, they should flee seven ways.

Hitherto

Hitherto the *LOVE* of God has been proposed, as one of the *only two* expedients, to save us from *impending* ruin; and this deservedly claimed the first mention, as being the *first* and *most generous* principle that can actuate a *reasonable* soul; not only as it implies *gratitude* towards our *greatest* benefactor, *affection* towards the *best*, and *reverence* towards the *greatest* of all beings, but, likewise, as it excludes all *low* and *mercenary* considerations; and turns our thoughts towards our own *unworthiness*, and the *amazing* goodness, the *great* and *wonderful* mercies already vouchsafed us, were it only our *continuance* and *preservation* in life.

But, lest there should be *some* among us, of less ingenuous dispositions, who instead of being bound by the *cords of love*, stand in need of the *terrors of the lord* to awaken their attention, and compel them to return—let it be observed, *farther*, that if they *will not*, or *cannot yet* *love* him, they at least ought to *fear* him.—If they *cannot yet* return to him, with their *whole* *beart*, nor take *delight* or *complacency* in his ways; let them, at least, turn to him in *fear*; and tremble at his word.

And, indeed, 'tis high time—when his *wrath* is so *visibly* upon the *multitude*—visible, not only by stirring up *formidable* and *successful* *enemies* against us round about, but in the *infatuation* of our *counsels*, the *inexertion* of our *strength*, and the *inglorious* returns of our *proudest* *armaments*.—visible too, in that spirit of tumult

tumult and disorder, those arts of rapine and oppression, that mortality murrain and dearth, which we hear every where complained of; and which there want not wretches to promote, by diminishing the staff of life, if not poisoning it with their adulterations.

Surely, all this is enough to alarm us, those especially whose hope lies chiefly before them; and whose most anxious desires are after the things of this life.—If, then, we are not moved at these things, we must needs confess, that even the stubborn Jews, the backsliding children of Israel, were less stupid than we: for when God slew them, or smote them with any plague or trouble; then, at least, they sought him, and enquired early after God—they REMEMBERED that God was their strength, and that the High God was their redeemer.

Fear, 'tis true, as it signifies dread or alarm, is a very ungenerous, a very unwelcome guest: yet is it altogether natural in the midst of danger; especially of such danger as we have not power, of ourselves, to avoid.

To speak, indeed, of our eternal interests, or of the mere concerns of the public, of the ruin of our happy constitution, and the salvation of our souls, would make but small impression on the minds of those, who are only to be moved by the considerations of things present and sensible; and have been accustomed to fear natural miseries only, the mere pains of sense and calamities of the body.—Well, then, if bodily

sufferings—if want, sickness, disease and death are the only things we are wont to dread—let them, at least, awaken our fear of HIM, who is the sole original dispenser of them; and teach us at once, to fear him who can kill the body; and also, after that, can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Now, the evils we have, hitherto, felt in *private life*, however great to *some* individuals, however matter of complaint in *general*, are *nothing* in comparison of those, which the Almighty may yet inflict upon us even in *this world*.—The *sword* has not yet reached our *borders*, neither are our *young men* slain therewith; our *strong-holds* are not yet set *on fire*, nor our *children dashed against the stones* in the midst of us.—But, how much reason soever we may have to think that *none of these* things may befall us—is it as *clear*, is it as *improbable*, that *earthquakes pestilence or famine* shall not destroy us?—The *first* of these we, not long since, had a *dreadful example* of, in a *neighbouring nation*; as well as some *earlier warnings* of, in *our own*. And as to *sickness and plague*, how *easily*, how *naturally* may they not arise in a time of *general scarcity and dearth*.—If the Almighty should continue to permit the *beasts of the field to be consumed*, and cause the *herbs of the field to wither* for the *wickedness of those that dwell in the land*—or, should the *wickedness of those that dwell in the land* still go on to make the *eyes of the needy to fail*, and withhold the *provision*

fion of bread from the hungry; ask, now, the physician; and he will tell thee—what calamitous disorders may thence arise; disorders infectious epidemical and mortal; such as may cause thousands to fall beside one, and ten-thousand at one's right hand!—Thus, among innumerable other methods, may the Almighty display his vengeance, to punish a guilty land; to punish it even with its own inventions; while the oppressor and the oppressed fall down together, and the chastisement of the people shall go forth with a curse on the head of him that withholdeth the corn.

Will ye not then fear me, saith the Lord, will ye not tremble at my word?—My judgments are already abroad, will ye not yet learn righteousness?

Indeed, could we but once be brought to fear God, and to stand in awe of his judgments, we should be naturally led-on to obedience; to avoid his displeasure by keeping back from transgression, and to be solicitous to do those things that are right.—The consequence of this would be *prosperity and peace*: and, unless we, afterwards, should be monstrously ungrateful indeed, we should go on from one degree of strength to another, and from *dreading* his vengeance, should learn to *adore* his mercy; and to love and obey HIM with our *whole heart*, who would thus have shewed himself *gracious—a ready help in time of trouble*.

Mean while, *amazing* it is, that *we* of this nation, in particular, should need so much en-

treaty, so many arguments and repeated persuasions, to love and fear God, and to keep his commandments!—we, who have had so many and so great deliverances to be thankful for, that hardly the history of any nation (that of the Israelites excepted) can furnish any thing parallel, either as to the frequency, surprizingness, or importance of them.

Had we, like the heathen, but few means of knowing and practising our duty—had we only maimed defective or fallible rules to go by—or had we a less clear revelation of the divine will, than that which now lies before us for our instruction; something might possibly be said, to extenuate our guilt, and account for our amazing depravity.—But, nothing of this kind can be suggested in our behalf.—We all know, or may know, the several duties required of us; may be all instructed, and assisted in the discharge of them; and have, all, the same glorious and unspeakable hopes to animate our obedience—the constant and endless favor of God; the assistance of his blessed spirit here, and the ineffable joys the permanent and unmixt felicities of his presence hereafter.

The scriptures are open to the view and bearing of ALL: the word is not hid from the people, or locked up in an unknown tongue, as it is among those of the church of Rome. And the terms of our acceptance, the conditions of our salvation are plain and intelligible to the meanest understanding.—No longer does God require pompous ceremonies, burthensome rites, or costly sacrifices;

sacrifices; but, in the most *absolute sense* of the words, *all* that the Lord our God now requires of us, in order to secure his favor, *to see good days, and to enter into life eternal, is to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.*

But, the misfortune is, that we either *totally neglect those sacred pages, the words of eternal life;* or read them only with a careless indifference, without making the *least application* of them to ourselves. Whereas, when we set about perusing the works of those inspired pen-men, we should consider, with St. PAUL, that they were intended for *doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness;* and that all the *actions and events* which are there recorded, were recorded for *our example and admonition.*

The BIBLE, being, as before observed, a *history of providence*, in which, not only the *actions of men*, but the *dispensations of the Almighty* are described, together with his several *motives of acting*; we should be careful, so far to accommodate them to the things of *our own times*, as to compare the several *remarkable events* that occur *at present*, with those which came to pass in those *earlier days*; and thence, endeavor to discover the most *probable causes* of those calamities which may, at any time, *threaten or overtake us.* In doing thus, we shall find, that *obedience* to the divine commands, and *integrity* of manners, were ever attended with national *success and prosperity*; and that *disobedience and looseness of morals, constantly*

stantly brought down the wrath of God upon the multitude; stirred-up their enemies round about, and brought upon the people, the sword, the pestilence and the famine, according to the aggravation of their offences, and the indignation of their God.—And, though the Israelites were, indeed, more immediately under a theocracy or divine government, and that the Almighty was their king as well as God, the supreme political governor of the people; yet, (nay, for that very reason) may their history serve to teach us the way of the Lord; and incline us to consider the method of his judgments and his dealings, in his moral government over the sons of men.

In fact, he, who considers ever so little, must acknowledge, that almost every thing which may be esteemed a reverse of fortune to our nation, springs from the like sources as those from which the scripture derives the national calamities of the Jewish people.—Agreeably hereto, the observation of Achior, a captain of Holofernes, on the Jews, may not improperly be applied to ourselves:—while they departed not from their God, they prospered; because the God that hateth iniquity was with them. But, when they departed from the way which he appointed them, they were destroyed in many battles very sore; and were led captives in a land that was not theirs; and the temple of their God was cast to the ground, and their cities were taken by the enemies.

And what then, can we expect, when all these things are disregarded; and when we still

still continue blindly in the error of our ways, in the monstrous iniquities and vicious dissipations, before mentioned?

It was the enquiry of the wise son of Sirach — *How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours, and whose talk is of bullocks?* And may it not, with equal propriety, be demanded—*How can they attend to judgment, understand wise counsel, or utter the sentence of wisdom in debate, that follow after pleasures, that glory in the spur, that chear the dogs and are occupied in their sports, and whose talk is of horses?* How can he face danger, whose hope is on earth? or look death in the face, who sees no Heaven beyond it? How can he be honest, that followeth after rewards; or he seek fame, that loveth gifts? And, in a word, how shall he deserve honour, that neglecteth his God, and despiseth that praise which endureth for ever!

Yet after all, such is the case with too many among us—not among those in high life only, but also among us, their seemingly more worthy CENSURERS; among all ranks of people, even among all the multitude thereof. God grant, however, that the time past may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, and to have walked according to the course of this world!

—God grant that we may be wise in time—that we may consider and lay to heart, and amend the evil of our doings! Who can tell, but God may then turn and repent, and turn away

away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ? Who knoweth, but that he will yet return and be gracious ; and leave a blessing behind him ? To this purpose, let us, in the mean time, address him with the deepest humility, in the words of the pious, as well as politic Judith ! —

Behold, Lord ! the Assyrians are multiplied in their power—they are exalted with horse and man—they glory in the strength of their footmen.—They trust in shield and spear, and bow and sling ; and know not that thou art the Lord, that breakest the battles. The Lord is thy name !—Throw down their strength in thy power ! and bring down their force in thy wrath ! For, they have purposed to defile thy sanctuary, and to pollute thy tabernacle, where thy glorious name resteth ; and to cast down, with the sword, the horn of thy altar. Behold their pride, and send thy wrath upon their heads !—Thy power standeth not in multitude, nor thy might in strong men : for, thou art the helper of the oppressed, an upholder of the weak, a protector of the forlorn, a Saviour of them that are without hope.—We pray thee, O God of our fathers ! and God of the inheritance of Israel ! Lord of the heavens and earth, creator of the waters, King of every creature, hear thou our prayer ! and make every nation and tribe to acknowledge, that thou art the God of all power and might ; and that there is none other that protecteth the people of Israel, but THOU.

To whom, Father Son and Holy Ghost be ascribed, &c. Amen !

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